

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ON THE RETIREMENT OF SENATOR
JERAHMIEL "JERRY"
GRAFSTEIN OF CANADA

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, December 19, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, as Co-Chairman of the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Helsinki Commission), and a former President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, it is bitter-sweet that I rise today to honor the retirement of one of this nation's closest friends north of our border. Senator Jerahmiel "Jerry" Grafstein of Canada is well known to many in this House. To me, he has been a mentor, friend, and colleague for the past 15 years or so. Senator Grafstein ends his service to the Canadian Senate this month. The distinguished Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, my very good friend BEN CARDIN of Maryland, recently gave an eloquent tribute on the Senate floor to Jerry Grafstein. Rather than try to be redundant to what Chairman CARDIN has already said, I thought to honor Senator Grafstein by sharing with this House his insightful final speech in the Senate of Canada. I hope my colleagues will read it and learn from it for years to come. Let me finally say to Sen. Grafstein that I thank him for his service to his country, his friendship to our country, and his tireless work on behalf of humanity. I look forward to seeing him in Washington or the great State of Florida sometime very soon.

SENATE OF CANADA, DECEMBER 9, 2009

HON. JERAHMIEL S. GRAFSTEIN: Honourable senators, thank you for those most generous words. My late father would have been surprised. My late mother would have said, "Not nearly enough." Honourable senators, I have always been curious about the words, "maiden speech." By custom, it designates the first speech a parliamentarian makes when a parliamentarian enters a house of Parliament. What do we call a farewell speech in Parliament when we are no longer a maiden? I leave that to honourable senators' imagination.

It has been over 25 years since I was first summoned to the Senate by Mr. Trudeau. When he called to appoint me, he said, "We need you in the Senate; take your time, Jerry, to think about it." I told the Prime Minister I did not need any time, that I accepted. "This is the greatest honour anyone has ever bestowed on me," I told him. "However, Prime Minister, I do have one question." Mr. Trudeau laughed. "What is your question, Jerry?" he asked. I asked, "What did you mean when you said, 'We need you in the Senate?'"

Mr. Trudeau laughed again and I heard the phone drop. A second later he apologized and said he did not mean to laugh. He said, "Jerry, you are the very first person I have ever appointed who asked me why." "Well, Prime Minister, why?" I repeated. "Why am I needed in the Senate?" He responded so graciously, and he said these words—I made notes at the time: "You have provided me

with great ideas. Now I want you to use the Senate as a platform to share those ideas with the Canadian public."

Honourable senators, I have tried. Sometimes I succeeded. Many times I failed. However, I have been motivated by three pieces of advice that Mr. Pearson gave me when I first entered politics and I sat beside him. He told me these three things: Aim high, work hard, and be fair. Some time before my appointment, Mr. Trudeau told me at a meeting, "Jerry, you have great ideas, but you have not overcome one problem that you have." "What is that?" I said. "I do not have any problems."

"Yes, you do," he said. "Each time you advocate a great idea, automatically and spontaneously, a coalition of 'antis' spring up to fight any good idea. Your job as a politician is to navigate around that coalition and get to the other side." Then he said these words that I have never forgotten: "Never give up."

Honourable senators, each day when I awake at the Chateau Laurier, I say a short Hebrew prayer: *Modeh ani Lefanecha*—Thank God who has awakened my soul to live another day. I walk a hundred steps from the Chateau Laurier across the historic bridge over the Rideau Canal and look up to the statue of my great political hero, as Senator Munson mentioned, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and give him a morning salute. Then I take another hundred steps, past the East Block, and the most beautiful building in Canada looms into sight. What a sight it is.

I see the Parliament buildings, the Peace Tower and, on top of it, the Canadian flag flying. I remember the courage of Mr. Pearson, who introduced the flag in the face of great division in this country. I swear every morning that I will do my very best that day for the privilege of serving in the Senate and here in Parliament. Honourable senators, I have served under eight Prime Ministers and twelve leaders in the Senate. I want to thank all of my colleagues, but especially the current deputy leaders, Senator Tardif and Senator Comeau, who have the most complex jobs in the Senate. I want to say how much I admire both of them.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Grafstein: Of course, I salute my own leader, the graceful Senator Cowan, and the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator LeBreton, both of whom lead us here so very ably. Thank you so much. May I thank the reporters who have reproduced—do not be shocked—almost 5 million words of my speeches, resolutions, comments and reports. I would be remiss if I did not mention the researchers of the Library of Parliament who have responded to my needs. To Mark Audcent and to the legislative staff who drafted my bills, motions and resolutions with skill and professionalism, I thank you.

For the many courtesies offered to me by the Speaker, his predecessors, by the Deputy Speaker, and to all the table officers, my sincere appreciation for your patience and advice. I have learned much from all of you. Of course my special appreciation goes to my executive assistant, who is sitting up in the gallery, Mary de Toro, who leads my mighty staff of one, the wisest woman on Parliament Hill who has kept me from making disastrous mistakes.

My first decision when I came to the Senate was what name and what designation I should use as senator. I chose my first given

name, Jerahmiel, although people have called me Jerry. People have been curious about why that name and not my customary name, Jerry. Jerahmiel is mentioned only once in the Bible. He was the son of the last King of Israel. The name means "the mercy of God." It is meant to remind the holders of that name to remember that they are here to help the less fortunate. My other designation as senator is Metro Toronto, to remind me of the great city of Toronto and the regional base of the key of my responsibilities here.

What lessons have I learned in the Senate? Honourable senators, I will not predict the future. I have always worked hard in the past and in the present. In the process, I became a much better criminal lawyer, a substantial constitutional lawyer, as my friend Senator Nolin has become, and an expert international lawyer. The future, honourable senators, I leave to you.

The precious gift that the Fathers of Confederation bestowed on the Senate and senators was independence and the freedom to make choices. That is what Sir John A. Macdonald and the Fathers of Confederation gave each and every one of us. Most of my choices I shared with my party and my leader, and sometimes I disagreed and did as Mr. Trudeau advised, spoke my mind to the discomfort at times of my leaders and my colleagues on this side.

I have served on all the committees of the Senate, and I have been kicked off several committees several times when I did so, and I do not regret it. I always believed that the Senate acts best when it is true to its mandate as a chamber of second sober thought. The Senate has always made mistakes when there has been a rush to judgment. "Principles and pragmatism," so said Lloyd George, "march best when they march together."

This chamber, following the teachings of the great Blackstone, is a chamber dedicated to checks and balances. To check and balance the executive and the other house of Parliament is our constitutional mandate. Hence, we should not place our trust blindly in government. Governments do what they do and do what they want and do what they must. It can be best summed up in Psalm 146: "Put not your trust in princes." We are here to speak truth to power. That is our constitutional duty.

I recall my maiden speech when I advocated an apology to Canadians of Japanese descent. Mr. Trudeau, who had just appointed me, disagreed. He argued that we cannot correct the past but can only improve the future. I disagreed with him on the facts. Citizens of Japanese origin had been deprived of their rights and property during the war, and there was no evidence whatsoever provided to me or to the Prime Minister at the time to call in or question their loyalty to Canada. I advocated for an apology, and ultimately it was given by Brian Mulroney, and I respect him for that.

I recall the extradition bill, as Senator Joyal pointed out, passed by a Liberal government in haste, with barely a debate in the other place. Under that bill, the Liberal Attorney General of Canada of the day would have had the power to extradite Canadians to a state that practiced capital punishment even though Parliament had abolished capital punishment under Mr. Trudeau after a fantastic and unbelievable fight across the

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